DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 040 822 RE 002 797

AUTHOR Kazmierski, Paul R.
TITLE Sensitivity Training and T-Group Procedures In a College Reading and Study Group.
PUB DATE Mar 70
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the College Reading Association conference, Philadelphia, Pa., Mar. 19-21, 1970

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.65
DESCRIPTORS *College Students, Counseling Instructional Programs, *Reading Programs, *Reading Skills, Self Directed Groups, *Sensitivity Training, *Study Skills

ABSTRACT

A model is proposed for utilizing some of the techniques of the laboratory method (sensitivity training and training group procedures) in a college reading and study skills course. A structure of traditional lecture sessions on study skills combined with modified training-group sessions is the suggested approach. A reading course utilizing some training-group procedures would be divided into theory sessions and laboratory sessions. The theory sessions would be traditional study-skill presentations and would meet 1 hour per day, 1 day a week. The laboratory sessions would be 2- or 3-hour blocks meeting once a week. Suggested procedures for conducting the training-group meetings are listed. By utilizing the input of the theory sessions, the training-group sessions could attack the dilemma of learning, invent solutions to the dilemma, internalize the solution by group feedback, and generalize the solution with applications to the actual learning situation. References are included. (WB)

ED040822

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Sensitivity Training and T-Group Procedures In a College Reading and Study Course

presented at

The College Reading Association
Annual Conference in
Philadelphia, March, 1970

by

Paul R. Kazmierski
Rochester Institute of Technology

RE002 797

The decade just past can be characterized by many cliches - the era of the Great Society; the time of recognition of alienation; the period of ecological destruction of the planet; and so on ad infinitum and ad nauseaum. But the descriptor this report speaks to is, "the 1960s was the age of emotional discovery."

During the past ten years and spreading into at least the next ten, mankind has abandoned, or at most, amalgamated cognition into explorations of the affective. The drug scene, the civil rights front, the generation gap all speak to man's concern with his emotions with man or his emotions with himself.

Recognizing that cognitive learning and skill training can no longer satisfy the "up-tight" needs of a society that witnessed a Presidential assassination or the fire-bombing of innocent children, American education has become a part of this "new trend." A cursory look sees a growing interest in "approaches to affective learning that assigns to the emotional factor in education a role as important as - or, perhaps, more important than - the traditional substantive content and skills." (Birnbaum, 1969). Among these approaches the most enthusiastically embraced has been the so-called T-group and sensitivity training.

A search of professional or popular literature will find many and varied definitions and descriptions of these approaches that include a wide range of laboratory training activities.

Bradford, Gibb and Benne (1967), who founded the National Training Laboratories in 1947, define the T-Group as

> "a relatively unstructured group in which individuals participate as learners. . . The data (for the group) are the transactions among members, their own behavior

> in the group, as they struggle to create a productive and viable organization, a miniature society; and as they work to stimulate and support one another's learning within that society."

Schein and Bennis (1966) further define laboratory training as "an educational strategy which is based primarily on the experiences generated in various social encounters by the learners themselves, and which aims to influence attitudes and develop competencies toward learning . . ."

Unfortunately, these representative definitions do not totally communicate the idea of laboratory training. Clarity and precision of definition, that is expected of scientific undertakings, is not applicable to these particular methods of learning and inquiry because of the divergency in goals, groups and outcomes. A brief overview of the framework of laboratory training and an outline of some of its current applications can perhaps lead to a better understanding of the T-group process.

The T-group (training group) is theoretically derived from the ideas of social psychologist Kurt Lewin. His basic premise was that action should be based on as many reliable or scientifically validated data as available. Then, once action is taken, continual checks should be made on the results of the action (feedback) and these data should be evaluated before further action steps are taken. (Schein and Bennis, p. 29, 1966).

In the laboratory setting, a small group - ideally ten to sixteen - meet with a trainer for some specified goals and a specified period of time (Steele, 1968). After a very brief introduction by the trainer, as to why the group is meeting and that he is not the leader, the "action research" begins.

In most cases there is some initial resentment to not having a structured or leader directed meeting. Then, gradually the group directs itself to various explorations about themselves and others, insights about communication processes in the group and a general discovery of how to learn about learning

from the observable data of the group interaction. Depending upon the group's goals, the experience of the trainer and the environment of the laboratory, the group generally comes away with internalized learning and greater awareness of interpersonal relationships.

This rather simplistic description of a group doesn't begin to explore the various applications and adaptations of the laboratory method. But perhaps it does communicate that a group, through its own creative devices and operating in a micro-society,can achieve some changes in reality performance.

An additional view of laboratory training may be derived from a comparison of its operation to a typical classroom operation:

1) In the classroom setting the teacher departs information - demonstrates; in the laboratory, the participants face a dilemma created by the trainer and delegates together.

2) In the classroom, students listen, practice and drill, according to the coaching of the teacher; in the laboratory, participants solve the dilemma by experimenting, inventing and discovering.

3) Teachers evaluate knowledge gained by testing; in the laboratory, participants do feedback evaluations of their own actions and reactions by others.

4) Teachers accept or reject students by grading; group participants and trainer generalize, theorize, formulate hypotheses, retest and recycle into new learning phases or new dilemmas. (Schein and Bennis, 1966).

PROPOSED MODEL

Today's college reading and study programs very easily fit into the structure of the classroom operations just described. While there has been much change in materials and methods, the typical reading and study course consists of the following:

1) An instructor lectures on some phase of efficient reading procedures or study skills.

2) Students passively listen to the lecture or practice some isolated skill with a soft-bound book or moving light.

3) Periodically, an objective test is given that is purported to measure progress.

4) A conference is held or a report is given, on termination of the course, that suggests improvement was made - or not made.

Perhaps this is slightly oversimplified. But based on this writer's observations, and possibly supported by some empirical evidence, somewhere, the four areas listed above are the general format of college reading and study courses.

The proposal supported by this writer is not to turn all college reading instructors into t-group trainers or our classrooms into micro-cosmic Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice (1969) scenerios. The college reading instructor's primary responsibility is skill training, not "group therapy for normals," as sensitivity and t-group sessions are sometimes called. Numerous reports have even suggested some possible dangers in having sessions run by inexperienced trainers (Shostrom,1969).

The proposal supported by this writer is to utilize some of the approaches and techniques found in t-group sessions that can increase our effectiveness in teaching "learning about learning."

1) Theory Sessions

The reading and study course that will utilize some t-group procedures may be divided into two types of sessions, theory sessions and laboratory sessions.

The theory sessions are general input or traditional study skill presentations. They may deal with scheduling, exam-taking, strategies for study and so on. Each session meets for one hour, once a week for the regular term.

In laboratory terminology the theory sessions provide information, experience and insights into possible "dilemmas," that might evolve in the laboratory sessions. While dilemmas should not be the objective of the theory sessions, they may be pointed out as theory sessions spend time with various study matters.

Dilemmas that may be generated in the theory sessions could include:

a. What should you do to prevent "blocking" on an exam?

b. Is it really wise to psych-out a prof?

2) Laboratory Sessions

In the model proposed by this writer, the laboratory sessions should be two or three hour blocks, meeting once a week for the term. (College scheduling procedures are not always conducive to this proposal, but Saturdays are available.)

The trainer may open the first session with something like the following:

"We will be together for many hours during the term. Hopefully, these sessions will provide an opportunity for each of you to increase your learning and skill in knowing more about the study process, the study environment and your involvement in the process of learning.

The best approach you can take is to analyze what has been happening in college and how can you best cope with the scene. I do not intend to serve as a leader."

Then the trainer keeps quiet. If he is asked to repeat he may do so. The rest is up to the group. In general, they may do what they wish.

During the remainder of the first session and future sessions, the trainer assumes the following role.

1. He maintains membership, but not leadership in the group.

2. As a member, the trainer periodically tries to draw direction to the four main operations of the group.

a. Dilemma Creation - the problems identified

b. Invention - the creative solving of the dilemma

c. Feedback - the actions and reactions the group has to various proposals for solution of the dilemma

d. Generalization - the application and readjustment of the solution in real study situation

(Caution: Trainer doesn't lead or direct, he reflects the above and never judges).

3. The trainer provides materials for exploration and invention. This could include tape recorders, psychology books, study manuals.

From this writer's experience there are a few additional techniques that may be helpful in this model, although not absolutely necessary.

1) Group Freeze-out

If the first session really "bombs-out" because of unwillingness of the group to let loose, some of the following procedures should develop an atmosphere of trust to feed into further group interaction: (Caution: Don't jump right in with these procedures. The group may work it out on its own).

INSTRUCTIONS FROM LEADER:

a. Everyone start walking aimlessly about the room, but for the time being, make an effort to not look at or touch anyone else in the room. Isolate yourself from others both physically and mentally. (3 minutes)

b. Now, continue walking about the room, but look at others as you walk around. As soon as you catch someone else's eyes, look away quickly and look at someone else. Do not hold eye contact with anyone, but glance furtively away - do not touch anyone. (3 minutes)

c. Seek out as many others as possible (one at a time) and try to maintain eye contact with individuals for 10 to 15 seconds each. Try to be more aware of the other person than of yourself.

d. Based on feelings you had during the eye contact, choose someone you would like to pair up with during this session. It may be more profitable if you chose someone you do not know well. Once you have paired up, discuss with each other your reasons for your choice. Discuss how you FELT during the different walking stages.

e. Split three minutes between you to discuss each of the following:

1. facts about self, family, hobbies, etc. (divide 3 minutes)
2. what makes you happy, and why? (divide 3 minutes)
3. what makes you sad, and why? (divide 3 minutes)
4. what music do you like - what does it say about you? (3 minutes)
5. describe each other as a building or group of buildings (3 minutes)
6. tell each other what you are really like - who are you? (5 minutes)

f. Next, both of you decide on another pair you would like to be with and get together with it. Discuss among yourselves the reasons for your choice.

*g. Each set of four choose another set of four, exchange introductions and move to corner of the room so that you are separated from the other groups.

h. Each person take a minute or two to tell the rest of the group of eight about your original partner.

i. Partners face each other, place your palms so that they are nearly touching, close your eyes (keep them closed during this exercise), and have your hands interact to express the following feelings: (no talking during this)

a. frustration	e. anger	i. sympathy
b. surprise	f. disgust	j. trust
c. fear	g. hate	k. love
d. friendship	h. loyalty	l. companionship

*j. In the groups of eight, discuss how you FELT during this exercise.

*k. The groups of eight spend 10 to 15 minutes talking about what has happened so far during this meeting.

1. The original pairs get together for 10 minutes and talk about anything you feel is important to the two of you.

* The group or dyads may vary depending on the total laboratory size.

(Orsburn, 1967)

2) Misdirection

Occasionally a laboratory group may start out with great vigor and direction. Ask permission to tape the sessions. If the group bogs down at later sessions, a short replay of some parts of the last sessions should get them back.

3) Relaxation

In some sessions, examination-taking will be the dilemma. If the group seems to be having difficulty inventing an approach to relieving the problem of "test-blocking" or "test-panic", a brief session or two, utilizing the techniques reported by Wark (1969) or Wolpe and Lazuras (1968) will help.

Simply stated, this is a behavior approach that suggests a person cannot be anxious or tense while he is relaxing. If a person is taught to relax during an anxiety-producing situation, he can no longer be tense.

SUMMARY

This paper has suggested a model for utilizing some of the techniques of the laboratory method in a college reading and study course. A structure of traditional lecture sessions on study skills combined with modified t-group sessions is the suggested approach.

By utilizing the input of the theory sessions, the leaderless group may attack the dilemma of learning, invent solutions to the dilemma, internalize the solution by group feedback and generalize the solution with applications to the actual learning situation.

The writer strongly urges the reader to do further reading from the selected bibliography before practicing or researching the model. While the

laboratory method could be an exciting approach to the reading and study courses, it could create a few difficulties for the unprepared instructor.

The affective domain could be the key to the cognitive domain, even in the college skills dominion.

Bibliography

References:

Birnbaum, Max, "Sense About Sensitivity Training," Saturday Review, Vol. L11, No. 46, November 15, 1969, pp. 82-98.

Bradford, Leland P., Gibb, Jack R., Benne, Kenneth D., T-Group Theory and Laboratory Method, John Wiley and Sons, Inc. New York, 1964.

Orsburn, Jack, "Micro-Lab for Large Groups," (available from the author at Case-Western Reserve University), 1967.

Schein, Edgar H., and Bennis, Warren G., Personal and Organizational Change through Group Methods, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., New York, 1966.

Shostrom, Everett L., "Group Therapy: Let the Buyer Beware," Psychology Today, Vol. 2, No. 12, May, 1969, pp. 36-40

Steele, Fred, The T-Group Movement - Its Past and Future, in McGraw-Hill Sound Seminars, McGraw-Hill, Inc., New York, 1968.

Wark, David and Johnson, Sue "Test Panic, Daydreaming and Procrastination," A paper presented at the North Central Reading Association Meeting, Flint, Michigan, October 31, 1969. To be published in the Yearbook of the Association.

Wolpe, Joseph and Lazarus, Arnold A., Behavior Therapy Techniques, Pergamon Press, New York, 1966.

For Further Reading:

1. Various Publications from the National Training Laboratory (NTL). Write to NTL, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 for list.

2. Psychology Today, December, 1967 issue, Vol. 1, No. 7. CRM Associates, Del Mar, California

3. Four reprints published by Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, Hartford, Connecticut, in the Notes and Quotes series:

    a. "The T-Group - Training or Trauma?"
    b. "Sensitivity Training - Doesn't Work Magic"
    c. "Sensitivity Training - What is It?"
    d. "T-Group Learnings for Group Effectiveness"

4. Joy - Expanding Human Awareness, by William C. Schutz, Grove Press, Inc. New York, 1967.